

Bill Will Expand Park by 3,000 Acres; Now Awaiting President's Signature to Become Law
March 25, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to expand the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve by over 3,000 acres. The bill also authorizes the park to acquire up to 5,857 acres of neighboring private lands from willing sellers, including a historic sugar plantation in the Town of Jean Lafitte.

The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act (S. 783, H.R. 1387) was previously introduced by Senator Mary Landrieu (LA) in the Senate and Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) in the House of Representatives. The bill was included in the Omnibus Public Lands Act (H.R. 146), which passed the House today with strong bipartisan support and is now headed to the President for his signature.

"Jean Lafitte National Historic Park conserves part of south Louisiana's rich marshes and coastal wetlands for future generations to enjoy," said Rep. Melancon. **"By expanding the park's Barataria Preserve, this bill will help us protect a unique part of our history and culture from disappearing."**

The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act will transfer 3,083 acres of federally-owned land to the Barataria Preserve Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, which is currently 19,000 acres. The bill will also authorize the Park to purchase some neighboring private lands from willing sellers. A portion of the new lands are part of the historic Fleming-Berthoud Sugar Plantation in the Town of Jean Lafitte and contain important wooded, freshwater wetlands. This expansion would allow the park boundary to conform to existing waterways and levee corridors.

The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve was established to preserve significant examples of the rich natural and cultural resources of Louisiana's Mississippi Delta region. The park consists of six physically separate sites: cultural centers in Lafayette, Thibodaux, and Eunice; the Chalmette Battlefield; Barataria Preserve; and the park's headquarters and visitor center located in New Orleans' French Quarter. The Barataria Preserve, which will be expanded by this bill, interprets the culture of those who settled the area and the unique ecosystem that sustained them, and preserves a representative example of the Delta's environment, containing natural levee forests, bayous, swamps and marshes.

Altmire Amendment

— The *Omnibus Public Land Management Act*, which included the *Jean Lafitte Boundary Adjustment Act*, is the most significant conservation measure to be enacted by Congress in the last 15 years. Rep. Melancon strongly supported an amendment included in the bill protecting the rights of

sportsmen on public lands. The Altmire amendment states, in part, "Nothing in this title shall be construed as affecting access for recreational activities otherwise allowed by law or regulation, including hunting, fishing, or trapping."

Rep. Melancon continued, **"As a life-long sportsman, I am pleased this bill will not restrict hunting and fishing on federal lands. Public lands should be preserved for all Americans to enjoy, and I will continue fighting to protect the sportsman's way of life."**

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